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Delhi's Margins

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# Introduction. Delhi's Margins: Negotiating Changing Spaces, Identities and Governmentalities

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# Introduction. Delhi's Margins: Negotiating Changing Spaces, Identities and Governmentalities

Radhika Govinda

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- 1 Delhi has been known by many names, some rising to prominence as others fade: the Imperial City, dotted by historical monuments and wide tree-lined avenues; the Capital City, from where the country's administration is run; Partition City, which provided a safe haven to Punjabi refugees; a city in a hurry to become a 'World Class' City.<sup>1</sup> It has always also been a city of the displaced and the dispossessed, the poor and the underprivileged who have found themselves on the margins of Master Plans and middle class consciousness. It could be argued that the houseless and the homeless, the refugees and the migrants, the slum-dwellers and the once-agriculturalists-now-urban-village-inhabitants and, in ways, women, lower-castes and religious minorities belonging to low income backgrounds are all casualties of Delhi's developmental dreams. But that would be too simplistic a characterisation, one that fails to recognise their agency, their contribution to the making of the city, and the fact that they are differentiated by the spaces they inhabit, the identities they claim and contend, and the governmentalities that they have learnt to negotiate.
- 2 This volume of papers traces the footprints of those from Delhi's margins as they seek to negotiate changing spaces, identities and governmentalities in the new millennium. The idea for the volume emanated from a panel on changing spaces, identities, and livelihoods in Delhi, convened at the European Conference of South Asian Studies (ECSAS) in Lisbon in July 2012. Authored by Indian and European scholars, these papers draw on ongoing and completed research since 2007. Given the extraordinary pace at which Delhi has been undergoing changes since the last decade or so, the papers aim at understanding the processes and politics behind such changes even as they unfold. In the introduction to one of the few edited volumes on Delhi published in the 2000s, Bharati Chaturvedi (2010: vii) has written how it was 'conceived with the intention of bringing into the public realm

the morphing, knotted city even as it was [being] experienced'. The aim of the present volume is to bring into the academic realm the same morphing, knotted city but with an explicit focus on those on its margins. The issues raised in the papers are too broad to cover fully in this short introduction. What is attempted here is to locate *Delhi's Margins* in contemporary research on cities and marginality, and to make some theoretical gestures towards framing the marginal subjects of the city of Delhi in relation to its changing spaces, identities and governmentalities.

- 3 Different concepts and theoretical approaches offer different ways of understanding the complexities that constitute a city. While it is not my aim to rehearse the various concepts and approaches employed to understand cities since the emergence of the Chicago School, a cursory survey of recent scholarly literature reveals that the world and global city paradigms (Knox & Taylor 1995, Sassen 2002, 1991) have become especially fashionable in contemporary research on cities. Critically reflecting on this trend, Anthony D. King (2000: 266) observes:

'With the invention of concepts of both the world and global city, stemming largely from a dominant American academy based either in Los Angeles or New York (with regional offices elsewhere) new paradigms have been launched the result of which.... has been to prompt scholars as well as municipal officials worldwide to ask, 'Is this, or is this not a 'world city'?' Those that don't make the grade have, to some degree, dropped off the scholarly screen'.

- 4 With the state machinery and the city's elite racing to turn Delhi into 'a global metropolis and a world class city' (*Master Plan for Delhi 2021*, DDA 2006: Introduction), it is very much on the scholarly screen, with scholars studying whether it can/does make the grade or not (Baviskar 2006, Dupont 2011, Ghertner 2011, Roy 2011).
- 5 In the run-up to Delhi completing hundred years as the capital of India in 2011, two edited volumes on the city, namely *Finding Delhi* (Chaturvedi 2010) and *Celebrating Delhi* (Dayal 2010), were published. The first volume is a collection of essays by academics, activists, urban planners and informal sector workers about Delhi's changing present and how its 20 million inhabitants negotiate it. The essays reflected upon public transport, the state of the Yamuna, women's safety, housing rights for the poor, shopping malls and the officially sanctioned campaign against street vendors and the homeless in advance of the 2010 Commonwealth Games. The second volume is a compilation of essays by distinguished authors, artists, activists and historians on different facets of Delhi's living syncretic heritage—language, music, cuisine, labour, trees, buildings, toponymy, etc. *Finding Delhi* (Chaturvedi 2010) and *Celebrating Delhi* (Dayal 2010) are not only the titles of two of the most recent edited volumes on the city, but are equally what numerous researchers, activists, and artists seem to have made their goal, with several other books, literary as well as academic, having been dedicated to this urban agglomeration in the last decade (Ali 2006, Bijulal 2004, Dalrymple 1993, Datta 2012, Dupont *et al.* 2000, Jain 1990, Jervis Read 2010, Legg 2007, Miller 2009, Spear & Gupta 2002, Sengupta 2007, Sethi 2011, Webb 2012, Zérah 2000, Zimmer 2012).<sup>2</sup>
- 6 The present volume aims at contributing to this burgeoning literature on Delhi by bringing together (more) recent research writings by some of these authors—Veronique Dupont and Martin Webb—as well as others, namely Radhika Govinda and Tarangini Sriraman, now involved in the amorphous task of 'finding' and 'celebrating' Delhi. The papers in this volume reflect upon the city's changing spaces, identities and governmentalities, from the point of view of the margins. As the city of Delhi and several

others like it in the Global South chase the dream of 'worldclassness', and as scholarly interest in world and global cities continues to grow, certain imaginations, representations and transformations of the city are privileged over others, with the margins, both spatial and social, remaining peripheral, to them. This is a concern that is shared by all the authors contributing to the volume.

- 7 The margins give shape to the city in more ways than one: they define its physical limits, they embody its economic threshold, they represent its social underbelly, but equally they are the 'unsung citymakers' (IGSSS 2012), without whom the city's economy and elites would crumble. The contributors to this volume refer to a wide variety of spaces—government and NGO offices, slums, streets, middle class colonies, and urban villages—in which marginalisation gets played out, and to an equally vast range of actors—migrant labourers, slum dwellers, government officials, activists, women, lower-castes, religious minorities, homeless, and once-agriculturalists-now-urban-village-inhabitants—who are involved in perpetuating, reifying, interpreting, negotiating, challenging and overcoming marginalisation.
- 8 A cursory glance at the origin and use of the term 'marginality' reveals that conceptually and empirically making sense of margins and the marginalised has not been straightforward. The concept of marginality originated with Robert Park's (1928) germinal essay, 'Human Migration and The Marginal Man'. He used the concept to characterise the lot of impoverished minority ethnic immigrants to a predominantly white Anglo Saxon Protestant United States (Dennis 2007). Edwin Stonequist (1937) built on it subsequently in his study of colonialism and the adjustment native people made to European domination. He highlighted the personality features of marginality based on the mental state of the marginalised (Dunne 2005). Hamish Dickie-Clark (1966) is credited with shifting the focus away from the personality of the marginalised to an examination of issues of power and privilege in 'the marginal situation', a situation evolving out of historical practices and policies which legitimise unequal status and opportunity structures (Dennis 2007: 2763). Dickie-Clark (1966: 28) was critical of the Park-Stonequist model in which the marginalised became permanently stereotyped as 'irrational, moody and temperamental', and emphasised that marginality needed to be understood as a more complex, dynamic and multidimensional phenomenon.
- 9 Much of the scholarly literature on the subject now understands marginality as a relative concept, one which is defined in relation to one or more 'centres' (see, for instance, Shils 1975). Margins (and centres) tend to be identified based on two kinds of parameters: spatial and social (Gurung & Kollmair 2005). Spatial marginality focuses on geographical location and physical distance from the centre, lying at its edge or poorly integrated with it (Larsen 2002, Sommers *et al.* 1999). Social marginality is concerned with human dimensions such as religion, culture, caste, class, gender, age when it comes to capabilities and access to resources in relation to dominant individuals and/or groupings. The study of social marginality has to do with understanding the processes and politics of discrimination, exclusion, inequality, injustice, and oppression on the basis of these human dimensions (Gans 1996, Massey 1994). The lines between spatial and social marginalities are often blurred, with overlaps between the two (Gurung & Kollmair 2005). One kind of marginality can perpetuate or manifest itself as the other kind, and an individual or a grouping that is socially marginalised is also likely to be spatially marginalised (and vice versa). The most obvious instance of this is that most untouchables (Scheduled Castes, in official parlance) in the Indian context are both

socially ostracised and physically excluded from spaces dominated by caste-Hindus, who are involved in 'othering' them.

- 10 Each of the papers in the volume examines both spatial and social dimensions of marginality. The middle classes and the physical locations in which they are dominant may seem to be the obvious social and spatial 'centres' to which the papers directly or indirectly make reference. However, by seeing the 'marginalised' subjects as outside the mainstream but very much part of the city as a whole, the contributors circumvent if not challenge the conventional understanding of margins and centres, an understanding which ends up devaluing the contributions of those living in and on the margins of the city, and seeing marginality purely as a site of domination and deprivation, rather than also as a space of resistance and agency. I return to these issues in subsequent sections and illustrate how the papers problematise such a binary understanding of marginality. For now, I concentrate on how the 'marginal subjects' are identified in existing empirical literature on marginality as well as in the papers in this volume.
- 11 The 'urban poor' are the preferred subjects of many a scholarly text on the urban margins (see, for instances, Fay 2005, Gooptu 2001). This is not surprising, given that the causes and manifestations of poverty—inequality, vulnerability, exclusion—are closely linked with spatial and social marginality (Dain 2003, Larsen 2002, Sommers *et al.* 1999). But it is important to bear in mind that whilst both 'poverty' and 'marginality' describe a situation that people would want to escape or turn into an opportunity, marginality is not always linked to poverty. Not all marginal subjects need be poor. For instance, sexual minorities are often marginalised but are not necessarily poor. Marginality, given its relative nature, covers a wider spectrum compared to poverty, which is often understood in more absolute terms. Andrea Cornwall and Karen Brock (2005) have written about how the moral unassailability of the development enterprise is secured by making copious references to the nebulous but emotive category of the 'poor and marginalised'. This could be argued of not only policy-makers, development organisations and activists but also scholars researching and writing about development. There is now extensive academic literature on the empowerment of the 'poor and marginalised' (see, for instances, Banik 2008, Burra *et al.* 2005, Kabeer 1994, Rodgers *et al.* 2012). Not all of this literature takes into account the heterogeneity among marginal subjects, including amongst the 'urban poor' (*e.g.* Ali 2006, Alsop & Heinsohn 2005).
- 12 In this volume, whilst several papers identify the subjects of their research as the 'urban poor' (Sriraman, Webb) or make references to their own subjects—the homeless and the migrant workers—as the 'urban poor' (Dupont), they do so in ways that not only recognise but also reveal the heterogeneity amongst the urban poor that the term otherwise hides, if not erases. We learn about the multiple and often intersecting identities of the urban poor—how, for instance, the intersections of gender, class and spatiality play out in the way poor women from the slums are the worst affected by changing governmentalities, specifically processes of enumeration and disbursal of entitlements (Sriraman). Govinda's paper does not concern itself with the 'urban poor', constructing its marginal subjects as 'male and female urban village inhabitants'. Her paper focuses on urban village inhabitants who are marginalised but not poor; they have found themselves on the margins of development plans even though they belong to a socially dominant community. The paper delves into the relations of marginality and domination among men and women of different ages within and outside this community

as they negotiate changing developmental priorities, uncovering in this way, the intersections of age, gender and caste based identities.

- 13 The issue of identity is, indeed, key to any discussion on marginality. Rutledge Dennis (2005: 5) argues that we tend to live our lives in and through 'identity shelves': males/females, rich/poor, dominant/victim, etc., that at some point, we are each 'the other', and that since not all the shelves are tightly attached, there is still room for identity construction. Feminist, poststructural and postcolonial theories have engaged in a sustained critique of such binary paradigms, which tend to map identities on to people and divisions on to cities in a fairly simplistic fashion (Bridge & Watson 2000). Their aim has not been to argue that strong polarising tendencies do not (or no longer) exist, but that relations of marginality are constituted by a confluence of differences, and that this needs to be taken into consideration by scholars. Though not always explicitly stated, the influence of feminist, poststructural, and postcolonial theories is visible in the assumptions and assertions made by the contributors about the identities of the marginal subjects of their research.
- 14 Not only are the multiple and intersecting identities of these subjects recognised (see reference to Sriraman above), typically an insight emerging from feminist theorisation on intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989, Davis 2008), the fluidity and dynamism of these identities are also taken into consideration. For example, Govinda sheds light on the intersections between gender and caste, laying bare the practices through which the men from the erstwhile landowning caste of Jats are attempting to reconstitute these intersecting identities, such that they can continue to maintain their dominance over other communities and their own families in the context of Delhi's urban villages. The marginal subjects of the contributors' research emerge as decentred ones, consistent with poststructural understandings of identities and subjectivities, of the kind articulated by Foucault (1977). For him, 'subjectivity is an epiphenomenon of discourse: there is no ontological self, but rather a sense of selfhood in an effect of discourse, and a location within networks of power/knowledge' (Sharp 1999: 267). From Dupont's paper, we are able to gauge how the identities of the homeless and migrant workers are indeed partially formed in different discourses—regional, industrial, governmental, and in different sites—the slums they live in, the factories they work in, and the places where policies are made, and how these identities are employed for different strategic purposes at different times—sometimes to hail them as 'urban citizens', and at other times to condemn them as 'public offenders'.
- 15 Further, the contributors to the volume go beyond a negative and somewhat simplistic characterisation of those on the margins as (mere) 'victims' of (neo-liberal) development, discrimination, or violence, a characterisation that is otherwise observable in the writings of postcolonial critics of capitalist paradigms of development (Konings 2011, Winn 2004). Marginalised subjects themselves tend to characterise the margins as positions and places of pain and deprivation. To quote bell hooks (1990: 341; emphasis mine) from a reflective piece in which she writes from the vantage point of marginal subjects:  
  
'Since we are well able to name the nature of [our] repression, we know better the margins as site of deprivation. We are more *silent* when it comes to speaking of margin as site of resistance. We are more *silenced* when it comes to speaking of the margin[s] as site of resistance'.

- 16 hooks argues elsewhere that their position and place on the margins and the daily reality of their marginalisation requires them to develop an understanding of themselves and those who dominate them, an understanding which enables them to see that the whole is made up of both margins and centres. She claims (1984:1) that their very survival is dependent on 'an ongoing public awareness of the separation between margin and centre, and an ongoing private acknowledgement that [they] are a necessary, vital part of the whole'. It is from both the ongoing public awareness and the ongoing private acknowledgement that they derive their agency, and the hope that their position and place on the margins need not be permanent.
- 17 The papers in this volume highlight the important roles the marginal subjects of their studies play, and how they exercise their agency to negotiate changing spaces, identities and governmentalities in the city. Webb brings to our attention a well-known fact about much of middle class metropolitan (if not urban) India: the quality of life and daily existence of most middle class households depends on the presence of the urban poor within middle class neighbourhoods, providing domestic labour and a number of other services. Without these 'significant margins', everyday life, as experienced by these middle classes, would quite simply crumble. In Sriraman's paper, slum-dwellers are clearly characterised as 'agential margins'. Their strategies deserve particular mention here. Sriraman terms them 'piecemeal pedagogies', attempts to secure entitlements, such as getting a free gas connection, by slowly learning the intricate complexities of bureaucratic procedures, by invoking higher authorities or citing political influence in the presence of officials, by adopting persuasive body language and by making veiled threats to expose incompetence or corruption of officials. These strategies reveal how slum dwellers employ their agency to overcome their routine marginalisation by state officials. An additional point: often, those on the margins exercise their agency with the help of social movements, civil society organisations (CSOs), progressive state-sponsored programmes and other such organised actors. There is a plethora of studies on this theme (for an overview, see Snow, Soule & Kriesi 2004). Within this volume, Dupont and Webb focus on the work of CSOs and what are called public-private partnerships (PPPs) in relation to the homeless and the slum-dwellers.
- 18 Several references have been made to space and positionality in the discussion so far: marginal subjects inhabit multiple identities in multiple peripheral spaces in the city; margins are sites of not only deprivation but also agency; the marginal subjects' positionality—being at the edge of the city—affords them a unique insight into the making of the city as a whole. These references point to the centrality of the notion of space to urban marginality. Feminist, poststructural and postcolonial critiques of binaries and dualistic paradigms have led to shifts in the way urban marginality is conceptualised today. One such noticeable shift in scholarly writing has been from the notion of 'city of divisions', or 'divided city', to that of 'city of difference', or 'multicultural city'. The notion of 'city of divisions' is anchored in Marxist thought, with cities being analysed as working in the interests of capital where the major cleavage is between the capitalists and the workers, whereas 'city of difference' is identified with the 'cultural' turn in urban studies, with the analytical focus being on how 'differences are constituted across many dimensions from race, class, and ethnicity to gender, sexuality, age, and able bodiedness, and [how] none of these exists as a homogeneous space or entity since they multiply and intersect with one another in complex, fluid, and diverse ways' (Bridge & Watson 2000: 251).



- 19 Several papers in this volume engage with a range of binaries—formal/informal, modern/traditional, urban/rural, civil/political—with reference to spaces as well as identities. However, they do so to examine how those on the margins themselves refer to these binaries to describe their everyday experiences, to unpack the complex discourses and practices that lie behind and beyond these binaries (Govinda), or to reveal the limitations that, as scholars, our use of these binaries places on our analytic capacities, in making sense of how those on the margins negotiate changing spaces, identities and governmentalities (Webb). Reference to ‘city of difference’ as a conceptual framework is implicit in this volume, in the sense that most authors recognise the multiple and intersecting identities of those on the margins, and also attempt to unpack how these play out in varying sites in the city. The papers also question some other alternative conceptual frameworks, including ‘world class city’ (Knox & Taylor 1995), ‘cities of everyday life’ (Sarai 2002) and ‘ordinary cities’ (Robinson 2006).
- 20 In addition, the contributors engage with a range of concepts to characterise the spatial margins and their marginal subjects’ relation to these margins *within* the city. These concepts also challenge the binary logic analogous to the framework of city of divisions. Martin Webb makes reference to two such concepts: ‘non-places’, and ‘edges’ and ‘in-between spaces’. ‘Non-places’ (*non-lieux*) is Marc Augé’s (1995) term for non-contiguous spaces like airports, hotel rooms and supermarkets that people pass through or do business in. He understands these as interstitial, transient places that lack historical and relational specificity and as being examples of ‘supermodernity’. An array of publications on cities in the last decade engage with this concept (Coyne & Stewart 2007, Fairchild 2012, O’Regan 2008, Sadana 2010). Webb observes that the spaces that those interested in engaging with the urban poor often occupy in the city are not ‘non-places’, in Augé’s sense of the term. Instead, Webb argues that these spaces need to be understood as ‘edges’ and ‘in-between spaces’. He writes (this volume):
- ‘Like other groups seeking to engage with the public, hawkers perhaps, or labourers and tradesmen hunting daily wage employment who squat with their tools near major road intersections and markets for building materials, these [civil society associational] groups must locate themselves at the edges of, or in between, zones of social exclusion and exclusivity in order to do their work.’
- 21 hooks (1990, 2000) and Elizabeth Grosz (2001) have extensively employed in-between spaces in their works. For them, and for Webb (who refers to hooks but not Grosz), the in-between implies a middle location between two opposed spaces: between in and out, here and there, this and that, and a concept that takes us farther than dualistic paradigms in making sense of cities and marginality. Living on the edge, or in-between spaces, equips marginal subjects with a particular way of seeing—to ‘look both from the outside in and from the inside out’—which remains unknown to those at the centre, to those who dominate (hooks 1984: i).
- 22 From Govinda’s paper, we learn that looking at the lived reality of marginalisation and violence in silos, as separate, unconnected events and experiences, occurring in spaces that can be neatly slotted along binaries like institutional/intimate and public/private is inadequate. Such approaches can afford only a partial understanding of the processes and phenomena of marginalisation. She suggests that instead it would be more useful to see marginalisation on a spatial and social continuum. This is not a new insight in the sense that feminists since the 1970s have challenged the binary opposition between the public and the private, demanding that the personal must be recognised as the political



(MacKinnon 1982). In Govinda's paper, the chaperoning, drinking, drug use, muscle-building, eve-teasing, wife-beating and killing in the name of honour that men from the erstwhile landowning caste of Jats engage in are manifestations of marginalisation and violence and, when read in conjunction with each other, expose the latter's complex, systemic nature that defies binary logic.

- 23 Two recurrent themes in the volume are the relationship between the state and those on the margins and, to a lesser extent, that between organised activism and those on the margins. Whilst papers by Sriraman, and also Govinda (though perhaps not as explicitly as Sriraman) discuss the role in and effect of the state and public policy in constructing, calibrating and contesting the marginality of various peoples and places in the city of Delhi, papers by Dupont, and Webb also delve into the part played by organised activism in these processes. These authors expose how state actors and activists in Delhi strategically construct the marginal subjects of their study—as 'citizens with entitlements' (and not mere beneficiaries) and 'partners' in public-private partnerships between the state and the population (Dupont), as the 'poor citizens of Delhi' (Sriraman) as well as a 'headache' and a 'nuisance' (Webb), and as 'encroachers' and 'public offenders' (Dupont). In Dupont's paper, we discover Mission Convergence, an initiative set up by the Delhi Government in collaboration with CSOs for reaching and empowering the poor, as well as learn about Delhi High Court's ruling to clear from the city all signs of ostensible poverty in the run up to the 2010 Commonwealth Games. In Webb's paper, we learn that the CSO he has studied mobilises slum dwellers with the aim of de-marginalising them through their own empowerment, but that in its own organisational hierarchy they continue to remain on its lower margins. What all of this reveals is that neither the state nor organised activism are homogeneous, unitary entities, but a series of (somewhat) separate actors with their different levels and approaches, and that sometimes the actor or individual agents of the same institutional actor too could operate in contradictory and inconsistent ways—an observation that finds resonance in other writings on the state and activism in postcolonial, post-liberalisation India (Govinda 2009, Jeffery & Jeffery 2001).
- 24 The changes in the nature of the state and governance practices in contemporary times are often characterised as evidence of 'neoliberal governmentality' (see, for instance, Ferguson & Gupta 2002). Foucault's (1991) concept of 'governmentality' has been interpreted to mean 'the direction toward specific ends of conduct which has as its objects both individuals and populations and combines techniques of domination and discipline with technologies of self-government' (Gupta & Sharma 2006: 277). Akhil Gupta and Aradhana Sharma (2006: 277) affirm:  

'neoliberal governmentality is characterised by a competitive market logic and a focus on smaller government that operates from a distance. Neoliberalisation works by multiplying sites for regulation and domination through the creation of autonomous entities of government that are not part of the formal state apparatus'.
- 25 For over a decade since the concept gained currency, much of the scholarship on neoliberal governmentality was focused on the Global North (Barry *et al.* 1996, Burchell 1996, Hindess 2004, Joyce 2003), and did not sufficiently address the significance of place, affect and resistance (Legg 2007, Thrift 2007). Whilst there is now an increasing interest in urban neoliberal governmentality in countries of the Global South, very few of these works (see for instances Appadurai 2002, Ghertner 2011) substantively delve into how it is locally spatialised, or focus on people's experiential narratives, exploring whether and how it is protested and transgressed. Papers in this volume (with the exception of

Govinda) make an important and much needed contribution to this burgeoning literature; they can be read as alluding to different ways in which neoliberal governmentality gets played out, both spatially and socially in the context of Delhi.

- 26 The papers in the volume can be said to build on existing understandings of neoliberal governmentality and also to illuminate how it is spatialised and experienced by those on the margins of the city. The papers illustrate how neoliberal governmentality involves social institutions like CSOs, communities, and even individuals that are not part of or acting in their capacity as members of any state apparatus, and that are taking, or made to take responsibility for activities formerly carried out by state agencies. Dupont writes about the 'public-private-community partnership' having become the new mantra of the Delhi Government and uncovers some of the politics behind an initiative—Mission Convergence—that was intended to embody this mantra. Initiatives like this can be seen as 'invited spaces' for participation and 'spaces for change'—terms that Dupont and Webb borrow from Andrea Cornwall (2002, 2004) and John Gaventa (2006a; 2006b) among others—but equally they can be seen as manifestations of neoliberal governmentality. If they are imagined as constituting an interface between the state and society, and driven by the belief that involving people as active citizenry with clearly defined rights and entitlements in the processes of governance makes for better government and enhances democracy, they are also 'framed by those who create them, and infused with power relations and cultures of interaction carried into them from other spaces' such that forms of domination, often previously associated with the formal state apparatus, silence the more marginal actors or keep them from entering at all (Cornwall & Coelho 2007: 11).
- 27 But the notion of power inherent in governmentality is not characterised entirely by discipline and disadvantage; it can also take a more positive and productive form. Fuller and Harriss (2001) have argued how if bureaucratic procedures are readily distorted and subverted by politicians and officials who know how to work the 'system' to their advantage, ordinary Indian people, including those on the margins, too possess an everyday understanding of the workings of the state and its administrative procedures, and can sometimes benefit from their own adequately competent manipulation of the political and administrative systems. Sriraman's paper reveals how those on the margins are coming up with ingenious and effective ways, what she calls 'piecemeal pedagogic processes', to negotiate the neoliberal state apparatus on an everyday basis. They are educating themselves in and through handling a wide variety of official documents and interacting with a wide variety of office bearers in an equally wide variety of institutional contexts such as ration offices, fair price shops, police stations, and government schools, where they encounter the everyday state and other powerful elites. By highlighting how those on the margins use their agency to deal with neoliberal governmentality through 'piecemeal pedagogic processes', the paper makes an important contribution to the growing body of literature on the everyday state in India.
- 28 There are two entities, one a state agency and another an urban policy document, to which nearly all papers in the volume make some reference, but which are best examined outside the framework of neoliberal governmentality because their first sighting predates the liberalisation of the Indian economy. These are the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) and the Delhi Master Plan. The DDA was created in 1957 to promote and secure the development of Delhi. The agency is supposed to act as the single planning and controlling authority for all its urban areas. It prepared the first Master Plan in 1962. The Plan offered itself primarily 'as a document on how to obtain optimum balance, between

available land and people; between people and jobs; between jobs and housing; between housing and environment' (Sundaram 2009: 224). Since then the Plan has been revised twice: in 1982 to formulate the 2001 Master Plan, and more recently in 2007 to prepare the 2021 Master Plan.

- 29 Given their brief, it is not surprising that the DDA and the Delhi Master Plans have played a crucial role in defining, modifying and in many cases recasting Delhi's cityscapes. But what emerges from the papers is that they have also contributed significantly to producing, reproducing and transforming the margins of the city and, more importantly, the lives of those living in and on those margins. Govinda, through her case study of one of Delhi's urban villages, shows how the DDA's acquisition of agricultural land in the name of 'urban development' had the perverse effect of increasing drug use, drinking and wife-beating among the urban village inhabitants. The ways in which land acquisition might affect gender politics and community dynamics in the village not having been one of DDA's concerns has meant that the urban villagers continue to pay a steep price for the loss of their land, monetary compensation received from the DDA notwithstanding. It is worth noting that several of Delhi's urban villages are no longer on the physical margins of the city, but that by and large their inhabitants remain in the margins of development plans (Ahmad & Choi 2011, WaterAid 2005).
- 30 Dupont's paper offers a contrasting example: she informs us that the 2021 Master Plan, with a view to improving the facilities available to the homeless, had stipulated in 2007 that a ratio of one night shelter per 100,000 people be maintained. She also shows how CSOs had used this stipulation in the 2021 Master Plan to protect and promote the interests of the homeless. If in 2010 they had referred to it to hold the government accountable for not having set up enough shelters, in 2012 they had used it to oppose the DDA recommendation that the ratio of night shelters to population be modified to 1: 500,000. What we can deduce from these observations culled out from the papers is that the Delhi Master Plan needs to be seen as more than an inert carrier of content; rather it should be seen as an actor which plays a part in social and spatial configurations in its own right. In the context of *Delhi's Margins*, what this means is that the Master Plan as a material object can be seen to instigate and direct as well as be directed to produce, reproduce and transform the spatial and social margins of the city. The use of actor-network-theory (Law & Hassard 1999, Prior 2008) illuminates how the Master Plan as a document is a member of networks of state and non-state actors, and is regarded by others in the network as an ally, enemy or simply as an instigator for further action, in the same way that it was regarded by the CSOs and the DDA.
- 31 Finally, there is no one narrative of a city, but many narratives construct cities in different ways, highlighting some aspects and not others. The papers in this volume offer narratives of Delhi by employing the focal lens of the margins, shedding light on some aspects and leaving others for other scholars to sight. Different methodological approaches tell different narratives. The contributors have used a range of concepts and qualitative and quantitative methods, so the narratives too are bound to vary. This volume is an invitation to experience and understand Delhi in ways that it is experienced and understood by those on its multiple and varying social and spatial margins, and by some of those studying them. I hope that it will spark debate and critical scrutiny of Delhi's changing spaces, identities and governmentalities, and of how these are negotiated from the margins.

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## NOTES

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